

Western Sicily tour itinerary:

Explore the 'other' Sicily: the remarkable west, which contains some of the most ancient and celebrated sites, some of the most dramatic landscapes and some of the best food on the island.

Once a neglected region renowned more for its Mafia strongholds than its tourist destinations, western Sicily has been reborn over the last 10 years and has much to offer, including its history, natural beauty, national parks and its food and wines.

Starting with a private transfer from Palermo, this tour takes you to the Egadi islands off the western tip of Sicily. You'll spend the next four days exploring this fascinating and beautiful archipelago. From here you'll be taken to Sicily's first national park for the last two nights, a spectacular piece of coastline stretching along the Castellamare Gulf, which you'll walk along on the last day. On the way to the park, you'll be taken on a guided tour of eerie Erice, an ancient village perched high on a mountain. The tour finishes with a private transfer back to Palermo (you'll have the option of adding a guided tour to the ruins of Selinute, one of the most important ancient Greek cities in Sicily).

Walks

The walks on this tour follow well marked trails along good paths over generally undulating countryside. They are a combination of coastal and island walks and range from 9 kilometres to 14 kilometres, taking 2.5 to 5 hours, not including breaks. In some cases, it is possible to shorten the walk or to opt out and join the walkers for lunch. This is a Grade 2 walk - gradings for the individual walks are on the itinerary - click the link for each day to see the details.

Accommodation

The accommodation is in very comfortable, family-run 3-star hotels. The superior rooms have en suite bathrooms, terraces and ample breakfasts are included.

Food:

As far as Sicilians' are concerned the best things in life include good company, family life, sunny days and above all, good food. Sicily's cuisine is as rich and diverse as its history: olive oil and wines from ancient Greece; elaborate dishes such as maccu di san giuseppe from Roman times (a delicious soup based on fava beans and fennel); citrus, saffron, cinnamon, couscous and gelato from the Arabic occupation; tomatoes, turkey and maize from the Spanish New World. Eating and drinking in Sicily is synonymous with a delicious journey back in time!

Western Sicily Itinerary

Day 1:

The tour starts with a private transfer from Palermo to Trapani (approximately 2 hrs) and then a hydrofoil from Trapani to the largest of the Egadi islands (approximately 15 minutes). Accommodation is in an excellent, family-run 3-star hotel in the centre of town, a short walk from the port. Dinner is included tonight.

Day 2:

Today you take a ferry to explore the smallest and most remote of the three islands of the archipelago (30 minutes away). The recommended walk climbs up to the central ridge of the island (574 mts) to the ruins of a lighthouse with extraordinary views over the islands (Grade 2, 9 kms, 3.5 hrs). You will also have two less demanding options: a walk along the coast to the south-eastern corner of the island on unsealed roads (Grade 1, 2.5 hrs) and another to the northern tip of the island to the ruins of a castle. Otherwise, you could take a boat ride around the island. You'll be able to have a drink at one of the bars on the port; and/or a swim in the blue Mediterranean Sea. Return by ferry. Cut lunch included.

Day 3:

A day exploring your base. Today's walk does a complete circuit of the island, passing a number of lovely beaches and lookout points (Grade 2, 14.5 kms, 4 hrs). Although quite long the island flat and walking very easy on unsealed country lanes (bikes are also available for hire).

The little medieval port had its heyday in the 19th century when the tuna fisheries off the islands thrived. In the late afternoon, you will be taken on a guided tour of the town in the afternoon, including a very interesting local museum and the very unusual 'underground gardens', botanical gardens which have been established in the deep sandstone quarries and tunnels on the north of the island.

Day 4:

Take another ferry to the third of the archipelago's islands, which holds the Egadis' greatest treasure: a gallery of prehistoric frescos painted between 10,000 and 6000 BC, which were discovered in a grotto in 1949 (may be visitable on appointment). The walk today is a beautiful walk across the island to the grotto and then wrap around the other side of the island on its way back to the port (Grade 2, 8 kms, 3 hrs). Cut lunch included.

Day 5:

Today you take the hydrofoil back to Trapani, where you'll be met and taken to the beautiful town of Erice, which sits on a hill high above Trapani. You'll be taken on a guided tour of this remarkable town (with time for a light lunch) before being taken to a gorgeous hamlet on the edge of Sicily's first national park, which stretches along the Gulf of Catellamare. Dinner is included tonight.

Day 6:

As the finale to your visit, the fourth walk is a beautiful coastal walk following a well-marked trail under majestic limestone mountains, through sub-tropical vegetation overlooking gorgeous turquoise-blue bays. You can have a picnic lunch along the way and plenty of opportunities to swim in the crystal clear water. (Grade 2, 15kms, 5 hrs). The walk is long but can be shortened (Grade 1, 10 kms, 3 hrs).

Day 7:

Private transfer to Palermo or Palermo airport.

Inclusions:

- six nights' accommodation in family-run 3-star hotels
- all breakfasts
- three picnic lunches
- two dinners (Day 1 and Day 5)
- following private transfers: Palermo/Trapani; Trapani/national park; national park/Palermo.
- all ferry tickets required
- private guided tours: Egadi islands and Erice
- reading lists and historical and cultural notes
- maps and detailed walking instructions
- 24 hour backup from local manager

Costs:

\$1750 per person b&b; \$1950 per person with dinners included (twin share basis); single supplement \$650